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## Oral History Interview: Frederick R. Bledsoe

Frederick R. Bledsoe

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ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA  
400 Hal Greer Boulevard  
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2667  
304/696-6799

SUBJECT: Owens Glass History Project

ORAL HISTORY NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

MORROW ACCESSION NUMBER: #527

ORAL HISTORY

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DATE: 6/21/94

Frederick R. Bledsoe

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OWENS GLASS HISTORY PROJECT

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: FREDERICK R. BLEDSOE

CONDUCTED BY: CHRISTIE KASPRZAK

DATE OF INTERVIEW: JUNE 21, 1994

Christie: Today's date is June 21, 1994, and this interview is for the Owens Glass History Project. Ok, what is your full name?

Frederick: Frederick R. Bledsoe.

Christie: And when were you born?

Frederick: December 24, 1934.

Christie: Where did you go to school?

Frederick: You mean grade school? Harveytown grade school, West Junior and Junior High and Huntington High, high school.

Christie: Ok, and your married.

Frederick: Uh-huh.

Christie: What's your wife's name?

Frederick: Juanita.

Christie: Do you have any children?

Frederick: I have three, I have Fred Jr., Timothy, and Susan.

Christie: When did you begin working at Owens?

Frederick: When did I go to work? In 53' and I believe in February, around the 10th or 11th, 53'.

Christie: And how did you get the job?

Frederick: Well my dad worked there, it sorta went down through the family, at that time that's the way they did it. If you had a son or daughter that needed a job and they were hiring, they usually hired you that way.

Christie: What did you dad do there?

Frederick: He was a mold maker, he worked there 39 years. He had just retired this building in uh, I thought maybe 67' or 64' maybe, I can't really remember.

Christie: What was your dads name?

Frederick: James Clyde Bledsoe.

Christie: Did anyone else in your family work there?

Frederick: Yes, I had two brothers that worked there, I had two sons that worked there, I had a niece worked there one time. There



were quite few of the family that worked there.

Christie: What job did you have there, what did you start?

Frederick: I started out in the packing room and I worked there about a month or two months and then I transferred to what they call the hot end, machine line, and I spent the rest of the time there.

Christie: And what did you do there?

Frederick: I ran a machine, machine operator.

Christie: And that's to make the bottles?

Frederick: Yeah, make the bottles...make the glass bottles, right. Hopefully they made them, sometimes they didn't do a very good job.

Christie: So you were they only one on the machine itself, each man was...

Frederick: Yeah, each man had a machine and they had a sweeper, what we call a sweeper he had a that time he had four machines, he relieved the operators to eat and got you anything that you needed, you know, or of whatever. And then you had a guy they called a machine foreman, he would be over four machines, he'd be responsible to fix stuff that you couldn't if you found stuff on defects on the bottles and stuff.

Christie: So what kind of opportunities for advancement were available, as far as pay and promotion and training?

Frederick: Oh, at that time...at that time they were quite a bit of chances for it really, of course seniority had a lot to do with it, but at...alot of guys I worked with, they went on to salary, and they went on up, you know. One of them, he ended up he retired our production supervisor, because he went on up like me sweeper on up through the rank, went to operator, machine foremen, shift foreman, foreman supervisor and then production supervisor. In a period of 30 years, 35. (uh-huh) But yeah, they were good chance for advancement in the company at that time.

Christie: What about training?

Frederick: Oh, they were real big on training, even up to right when they closed it they were still...Owens Illinois has always been really good to train their people. That really gave you an advantage, if you wanted to go some place else to get a job, you know, if they found that you were from Owens, you never had any trouble at all getting a job, because they knew you were well trained. I could say that for them.

Christie: Did you have to be trained when you started working?

Frederick: Oh yes, yeah, you had to serve your apprenticeship on the machine, you know, it took you, at that time 1200 hours, but no time you could operate one, you were moved back to sweeping in the summer time and when it got hot and people were taking vacation and they were off, your seniority let you move up to the machine. And when you got 1200 hours on a machine, you got an operators card, and that automatically increased you pay and so forth so on. And as the years went over, why the uh, time got longer. At the end it took 4,000 hours to get your card, but they gave you time when you were relieved...any time you were relieved on a machine back when I got mine, the only time you got it was when you operated the machine itself, you know, I mean, by yourself, and that was it.

Christie: So mum, what kind of things did you like about working there?

Frederick: Well. I liked the money and uh, it allowed me to raise a family and have a home and so forth so on, you know. With our leaving where I was born or raised. They were good people to work with, I mean they really were. Probably more like a second family, really, you know, that's the only way I can explain it.

Christie: Did you socialize with them outside of work?

Frederick: Yeah, yeah a lot of them, yeah sure. Yeah we uh, oh back then you played golf together, you played ball together and drink beer together and you know, yeah had a lot of good friends, yeah, yeah, outside of the factory.

Christie: Were there certain things that you didn't like about working there?

Frederick: I didn't like the heat, didn't like the shift work, but that was part of it, you know. It was extremely hot in the summer, laughter} you know, and the shift work like I say, but you get use to it. It wasn't all that bad.

Christie: What about management?

Frederick: In all fairness, I would have to say that basically, I the majority of them I thought they were pretty decent really, I mean, we had at the last, you know, we had some didn't particularly care about, but that is part...part of it. When I first went to work there you didn't...A.C Buds was the plant manager and he was the plant manager forever there, it seemed like and uh, he didn't change...they didn't change their personnel. Then not too many years ago they decided to take another course that they felt that...that the supervision shouldn't be from the factory they are going to supervise. In other words, they felt the outside people should come in and that was what was a matter with this factory

over here, but uh, some body made a bad judgment when they done that, you know.

Christie: Did that cause tension?

Frederick: Well, no not really it just...I don't think the people knew what they were doing, a lot of them that they brought in, you know, they didn't. And then...it was just one of those things, it happened. That was their decision.

Christie: That was in later years then?

Frederick: Oh yes, maybe within the last five or ten years, whatever, you know.

Christie: In the 80's?

Frederick: Yeah, and then, you know we uh, they...Huntington is in a bad place for shipping. Shipping costs are so high to ship out of here, you know. The other factories could ship so much cheaper than we could, really. So that had a lot to do with it. And then...I don't know, I really don't know, it wasn't because we wasn't producing, we were, but they say, you know, that we just couldn't satisfy the customers so forth so on, and the shipping costs and this and that, you got no way of knowing, really except what they tell ya. And I guess that what caused it to be shut down.

Christie: Now did you mum, when you say you socialized with other workers were any of them management or did you mostly socialize with the hourly?

Frederick: Well yes, uh well true, I had two real good friends that were actually my bosses. They were shift foremen...but that was inside the factory they were shift foreman, outside, you know, they were friends that I socialize with, Red Jones and Harley Gramm were their names.

Christie: What was that Red...

Frederick: Red Jones and Harley Gramm, their both dead now, but.

Christie: Harley Gramm.

Frederick: Yeah, their both dead now but, yeah, I socialize with them quite a bit outside, really. That was...that was ok, you know, it didn't carry on into the factory, they didn't take advantage of it or nothing. But they were both my bosses, you know, at that time.

Christie: Now what year did you say you started again?

Frederick: 53'

Christie: I was just wondering about maybe the political atmosphere in the United States, how that might have affected. There was the war.

Frederick: Yeah, well you know, see it wasn't really...you had Korean, it wound down and then Vietnam came up and while I was...and that was part of it. But it wasn't too much of an affect on me, as such, you know, except I guess it probably affected the business world, I guess times were a little better when we were in war, I guess, or police action or whatever they want to call it, you know.

Christie: Did any thing change at the plant?

Frederick: No, not really, like I say times were good then, you know, we had a lot of machines and well one time, we were, I suppose the biggest flow factory in the world, at one time. When I started we had 36 machines, which you know, was quite a few machines.

Christie: And how many were there when you left?

Frederick: Six, and then well they run two tanks, had three machines on each tank, and then they shut that thing down and then they run three machines and then finally shut it down. But we employed, I guess on the hot end alone we had probably 300 people in that department, went down to about, counting the calling list, we only had about 90, we had about 25 of them on the calling list, or 30. We had about 50 or 60 people working on the hot end still. So it went down dramatically over the years.

Christie: When did you last work at the plant?

Frederick: Well the last working day...I was suppose to go back December 11. They called me and told me not to come out, it was on a midnight shift December 11th, I had been off the 9th and the 10th, and I was suppose to go back the 11th, they called me the 11th and told me not to come out. That was the last day of work, 8th was my last day, I guess, of December.

Christie: Were you expecting anything at all?

Frederick: Well in a way, yeah in a way we were, but really not that quick. See, I was president of the local union over there, on the hot end, and they...I worked 3-11 shift and the industrial relations man came back, Phil Shaffer, and ask me if I could get a couple of my committee people and have a meeting in the morning at 7:00, and I said well, you know, that was about 6:00 that evening and he come back on the machine line and I ask him if it was important, and he said, yeah, it is very important, and I said ok

I'll be there. So when I went in that morning, I kinda had an idea that might be...but it was still kinda a shock, really when he told us that. He told us we were going out the first of the year, that was giving us a 90 day notice, he had to give us a 90 day notice. So that was uh, September, 1st of September? (right) So he gave us 90 days that morning. Rob Smith, the plant manager he gave it to us, he was the vice president of the company then. See, we had a lot of people pass through us, just coming over here at eventually ended up with [inaudible]...Owens Illinois. Terry our plant manager, he was number two in command the last track I had of him, under Joe Lemieux and Lemieux was chief executive officer and then Terry was number two, he was under him, and then we had Rob Smith and like I say, there were quite a few of them that came through the factory over here that was one time or the other was a plant manager or something that ended up to being promoted up to vice president or whatever.

Christie: I didn't know you were president of the union.

Frederick: Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.

Christie: Could you tell me anything interesting about being one?

Frederick: Not really, we had a pretty good relationship in our union with the company, we just had a few problems over the years, but nothing real serious, you know. They fired one guy, but, you know, it happens. I really thought we had a real good relationship with the union company.

Christie: How many years were you president?

Frederick: Uh, nine, (wow) I was president nine, and I was vice president, for uh, five years; grievance man, or committee man are what they call them, grievance men now. Yeah, like I say, we had good relationship with the company. The other union, the local out there, they had a lot of problems, they had a lot of people and they had a different situation than ours.

Christie: Yours was a real small group, right?

Frederick: Yeah, we were a small group and then, you know, in a machine line it was a little different. We had no females, at one time we had a couple or three try to work back there but they didn't last, they didn't want to stay, so we didn't have the problem with that, that the other local had. The other local had a lot of woman and men that worked the same jobs and stuff like that, they had a lot of problems, grievance wise and stuff like that.

Christie: What kind of grievances did you have in your...?

Frederick: Uh, really not too much most of the time my grievances



were settled with the supervision I worked with, you know. We may have to file an a grievance and for pay, usually for pay is usually what it was for.

Christie: Was there anything for working conditions?

Frederick: Well yeah, we hollered about our condition our working conditions alot, you know. We use to have one, Darrell Deck, he was a foremen supervisor and he say, we'd say it was hot and he'd say GD, you know, its a glass house, it is suppose to be hot in the summertime, you know, and stuff like that. But it, you know, oily, smokey, and hot, but still, like I say they were pretty good to us, really, I think.

Christie: Were those working conditions dangerous?

Frederick: Yeah, it was dangerous, yeah, we had several guys with their hands, got their hands mangled or hung up in the machines, burnt and that was an every day occurrence. Alot of times you would get burnt through your shirt, you know, or something like that, hold mold...you would have to reach through the machine or something. But uh, we had a couple guys that had their hand hung up pretty bad, you know, over the years I worked there. We had one guy get burnt, a long time ago, George Newcome was his name, he caught on fire and he...it killed him, he died, that is the only fatality we had. That was a long time ago.

Christie: When was that about?

Frederick: Oh, you know I can't even remember that. George...I'd say it's probably...Wannita, was we married when ever that happened, or do you remember? (speaking to his wife) I don't no whether she remembers of not? (I can remember) I say that was twenty-five years ago probably.

Wannita: Oh, I'm sure.

Frederick: Yeah, it had to be, because his son...his son transferred, and he was getting ready to retire from Michigan up there, he went to Sherlock, Michigan, his boy Roger, he worked over there, and he was getting ready to retire from up there, so it had to be a pretty good while ago, because Roger was real young then. But uh, he caught on fire, and I guess he breathed the flames, his work shirt caught on fire. He was spraying the mold and the dope caught on fire and flashed back on him and he had a denim shirt on and it caught on fire, you know. Some guy that worked next to him grabbed him and put it out pretty quick, but still I guess he swallowed the flames. So that is really the only fatality I know of there, in the hot end.

Christie: Did the union ever change conditions to make them safer?

Frederick: Well, really you have to understand the company, they were really safety conscience, they really were. I mean anything that pertained to safety you had no problem what so ever, really, I mean. All you had to do is tell somebody that you had an unsafe condition or whatever and they were right on it, really that is the only thing you didn't have a problem with before. Like I say, it was dirty work we worked at and hot and sweaty stuff, but as far as safety they were real good about, I can't fault them for that. In fact, that carried through the whole organization of Owens Illinois, I'm pretty sure, because when I go to a presidents meeting or something, you know, if you had any safety problems, it wasn't no problem in any if their factories, getting it taken care of. (huh)

Except, well we breath a lot of stuff and they wasn't noting we could do about that and I'm not sure that...that maybe didn't cause any problems and it may cause us problems yet, later on in life, I don't know. The dope smoke, what we called dope (right) that they lubricated the blanks in the mold with, and when you put it in there see you...it got hot and the smoke came off of it, you know, where you breathe that for 40 years, I'm not really sure that may cause me problems. I did smoke pretty heavy, up til I had a heart attack, then I quit that, so. (wow)

Christie: You said that at one point there was only a couple women who tried to come into the mold...

Frederick: Yeah, they came back, you know, when we had openings in the summer time, they would hire...they would hire people, uh, they put up a bid list and if we had some women out in the faculty room the worked in the faculty room that wanted to come back to the hot end, you know, but none of them ever stuck it out, you know, they never...just to hot of work for them. Now other factories, they have, they have women operators other factories do, not that many but they have some. I think Zaniesville, Ohio has some and uh, one or two up there, and I'm not really sure what other factories, but I'm sure some of them have it, cause out of 22 or 23 factories, you know, their gonna have some...some place. (right)

Christie: Did that change from the early years to the later years where there, were women increasingly allowed to get into different jobs?

Frederick: It changed when ever they had the... the uh, I believe the suite over there, I believe they filed a suite, I'm not really for sure, you know.

Christie: Was that the Opal Mann suite?

Frederick: Uh-huh, I think it was, yeah, Opal Man, right. And they filed a suite for equalization uh, because they were held down out there, they weren't allowed to do anything except selecting the bottle. The men came in...out there you are hired in as a lahr

attendant. Then when ever an opening came up your seniority allowed you...you went up to uh, what they call a checker and he counted the ware that was packed ever hour, and they called him the checker. And then you went from checker you went to resource...no quality out there is what I remember, you went to quality then you went from quality to crew leader, but that was strictly mens' jobs, and every time you made that jump they raised you a nickel on the hour and the women were not a loud to bid on their job. They stayed... and when they brought that suite they came around, and then the women over there had 35 to 40 year seniority, they were packing ware. And you had guys crew leading out there and hadn't been there 10 years, 5 to 10 years see, that was what happened.

Christie: About when did that happen?

Frederick: I really can't remember that, my memory is probably world's worst, but I can't even remember when that happened. It seemed to me like, I'm not really sure, but uh, you know, I'd be afraid to guess even, really. I wasn't concerned with it because it didn't involve me at the time see, that was a different local. Cause they had a womens local and a mens local out there, they had uh, let me see if I can remember, uh well we ended up with 212 was our local number, it use to be uh, I think they added the numbers together to come out with it, I forget what the numbers were out there. The womens' local was a different number from the mens' local. So the government said ok you have to combine them now. When they ended up they combined their local and they ended up with 212 out there was their local number.

Christie: But the mold makers was always separate?

Frederick: Yeah, that was what my brother was, the two brothers I had work there, they were flint workers. They worked in the mold shop. In fact, uh, one of them, he died when he was 39, he had uh... he died real early. But the other one he had 30 years in, he gets retirement, but that is all he gets is his retirement. And uh, well he lives at Spring Valley, Jim, he's my brother.

Christie: So the suite wasn't the reason why women started coming into your department?

Frederick: I think, well really they more the less said yeah okay they got an abundance out of jobs out there that they could bid on...that they kept them from bidding on so that anything that come up that they wanted to have a shot at. It was always you know, you got it easy than us, you know, or whatever, you know, and when you get back there you find out that the grass is not quite as green on the other side, you know, that's what happens really. And it, like I say, it was hot work, and heavy work and dirty work, really, you got dirty.

Christie: What about race, did you have men of different races in



your department?

Frederick: We had uh, Whittenburg, and Roosevelt Vines, and we had...the two that...well Roosevelt he quit and went to work for the gas company, but uh we call him cool Willy, Whittenburg, Bill Whittenburg, cool Willy, he was a fighter. Back years ago, he ended up...he was there when the shut down though, Bill had been there uh, I guess 25 years anyway. In fact he use to fight there, we had a plant manager that tried to help him, you know, get involved in the fight game a little bit. In fact, he bought stuff for him to train with and all that stuff. And we had fights over at the club house, over there. (is that right) Smathers was his name, of course, he had a little problem with them, a money problem with them later on, after he left us, plant manager. But uh, he uh, he had involved a lot of fights over there, he brought them in...we'd have sale outs over there at the club house, you know.

Christie: And did you think that the black men had the same opportunities you had?

Frederick: Oh yeah, definitely they had the same opportunities as I did. We had no problem with that.

Christie: I don't guess the union was every involved in any race discrimination?

Frederick: No, no, never no problem. Like I say we didn't have that many black people there, like I say, Whittenburg, and Roosevelt Vines...the two. We had one summer help there, I believe that Wade, he played ball for Marshall, he came there to work one summer. We just didn't have that many. Well, I take that back, we had another one, I clear forgot him, uh, he was going to Marshall and was working there. Lord, lord, my memory had just gone on me. Uh, Geraldine is what we called him, I'm trying to think whether he is a...what his name was. I might get my seniority list and remember it. But that was the three that stayed there.

Christie: Now there weren't any blacks in the department when you started, right?

Frederick: Oh, no nut-huh absolutely, we had segregation in Huntington when I started, really, the theater was segregated and so was the restaurants, schools, they had Douglas High School when I was going to high school. (it was all black) Yeah. Right after that is when they started. But it was quite a while before they started hiring them for Owens, but I really don't know why, you know. I don't know if that was back then where they were holding out or not, I can't answer that, but it was a while before they hired them there.

Christie: Do you remember when they first hired blacks?

Frederick: Not really, I really don't. Uh, it just wasn't a monumental occasion for me to remember, really, we didn't have none work there, and then all of a sudden they hire them. But we understood it, that there was segregation back then, really. (right)

Christie: Did that cause any tensions that you remember?

Frederick: No, not really, it is strange, but it never. Never had any problem with it, no. Somebody might have one time or another let a word go that was commonly spoken, and maybe that was one, but I don't any of them took offense to it, or you know, or what ever. There wasn't nothing meant by it, but there was a way of talking and you know, but there really wasn't any problems, no.

Christie: So were you friends with these men then or did you just work with them?

Frederick: Oh sure, outside of the factory no, I wasn't that...I was friends, at last I thought I was friends with Wittenburg, especially Bill. He worked my shift quite a bit, you know. But as far as...no on the outside, no nut-huh. They just didn't...one thing, I'd see them different places, like a sporting event or something like that, but not go with them, no. (right)

Christie: So all the supervisors in your department were always men, then too, because there were a few women that tried to get...?

Frederick: Oh, yeah, yeah, they were all men.

Christie: Were there ever black supervisors?

Frederick: Uh, no.

Christie: No. You had a big family and I was wondering, especially with shift work, did you have any difficulty balancing home and work?

Frederick: Well, I don't guess, I'll have to ask my wife. {laughter} No, we never differ, we talk about it even now how much different our life was then somebody that worked day shift all the time, it is a different life all together. Because you got me, a lot of times the days off came through the middle of the week, you got five off and then you went back, and five and then five, five and then five, like that and then you swung every week. A lot of things I couldn't take part in because I worked shift work. That's just the way it is.

Christie: Who did you end up spending your free time with, people that were also on your same shift?

Frederick: Well yeah, it would be alot of that, yeah...back when

like I say, we use to play golf all the time, and we played ball, and uh...

Christie: Those are such unusual days off, must have been hard.

Frederick: See, Owens use to even have a ball field over there, you know, where the warehouse is now. They were...they treated people alot different back then. I don't know what the situation was it was just plenty of orders, I guess and they was making a lot of money and they were good to their employees. They had all kinds of outings. They have father-son outing out at the rod and gun club, which they own out there, you know, where the Beach Fork Dam is now. They would have Owens day down there, they would have a stag night for the men, they have a doe night for the women, they would have eats and drinks and games and prizes and stuff like that, they did quite a bit.

Christie: Did your whole family participate?

Frederick: Well, yeah we use to go to like uh, the Christmas parties, and Owens day down at Camden Park, that was a thing, and especially when I was a kid, it was a big thing, a real big thing. But it gradually over the years, just got away from it.

Christie: Oh, you went with your father, he would take you and your brothers?

Frederick: Oh yeah, yeah, well we took our kids too, when we had it, back years and years ago, you know. But they did away with all that.

Christie: Now who did away with it, did the new management come in?

Frederick: The top echelon of Owens Illinois, that's their directive, you know, to come down. Because we came back, I never will forget that uh, we sit in a union management meeting and we'd have...we'd suppose to have them every month, but we didn't have them every month, but you know, and they said well...this was about two or three years ago or four years ago or something like that. They said uh, Owens Illinois has changed their position now, that they felt that they kinda got away from their people, you know, and they wanted to get back to where they wanted to get back with the people and all that stuff, you know. I made a remark about six month later, I said I'm glad you all made that decision, I don't believe we could have worked with you if you hadn't, you know, because how bad we got treated. But it was completely different, really, a change in what they done, and it was like I say even now when they shut the factory down there changing now. They got a plan what they call, I don't guess it is any secret, they call it Genesis, that they taken the word from the Bible, you know, and they are going to rebuild from ground up. They go through all their

factories and they are observing all the lines and the ones that run the best, what they told us, that's the way they are all gonna be, you know. In other words if we had a line here in Huntington that ran real good, compared to the other factories making the same job, then those factories would change, like Huntington, or visa-versa, you know, and that was what they were going to do. And they were going to get like 1500 people last track I had, (wow) organization of like 1000 hours and 500 salary, I mean, that's what I heard, I'm not really sure, I can't say that is the truth, but I do know that they are down sizing us. (huh) And they try to remain competitive too, it's pretty competitive anymore, you know. Anchor [inaudible]...or Anchor [inaudible]...the KKR bought us out, that was a big change, (right) I guess that was when things changed quite a bit. Because Owens took on a big debt and uh, then they turned around and bought Brockway, and they took on a bigger debt, paying all that interest, they were paying a million dollars a day interest on their loan. So each factory had the obligation to come up and make so much money, a month, you know, to pay their debt.

Christie: Is that when all the management changes, started happening too?

Frederick: Yeah, well yeah. They changed quite a bit, especially when they bought Brockway, you know, Brockway glass uh, it was a fairly big outfit. Out dated a lot of their stuff was, you know, Owens spend alot of money trying to bring them up to standard with Owens, a big machine, that was the last track I had of it, so I don't know what they have done.

Christie: Now what about just comparing the time you started and the time you left, umm, how did automation change the jobs and your job?

Frederick: The machines got bigger and faster; yeah quite a bit, it changed quite a bit. Uh, we had uh...and that really probably was alot of it too, because when I first went to work there you had uh, a five section machine, that was a big machine they had, five sections that each one of them made a bottle, you know, that is what they call it a section. Now they are into, what they call quads, it makes four on each section and there are ten sections and twelve sections. In fact, I have never see it, but uh, one of our competitors had a sixteen section machine, and it just kept getting bigger; faster and bigger.

Christie: Did that cause people to loose their jobs?

Frederick: Yeah, well yeah, it sure did. Because they could take out...we could produced many bottles with our nine machines we had over there and they probably thirty-six, I mean, a many bottles day, you know, so there was a lot of jobs went down the drain there.

Christie: Was there a time when the factory started laying off a lot of people?

Frederick: Yeah, back in 19 and uh, lets see 57' was the last time I was laid off. And that was a big cut back then, but I was only laid off about 2 months, I guess, a month or two months, in 57'. And I suppose then the economy changed around, probably a war or something changed it and they started the machines back up, said they idled a machine ever time they would idle a machine they would lay people off. Then things went pretty good for a long time, and then they just started gradually going down hill, you know.

Christie: When you say gradually, were they gradually laying people off or did they...?

Frederick: Yeah, see what they done in about 60'...when did the boys get laid off(talking to his wife) in about 62'? (no, it was about 79, and then...)ok, 79', I guess it was 79', that's when the big lay off come and that was due to uh, they just said our factory was too big to handle it, we had a lot of problems there...not where I worked, but in the factory room, they had a lot of young people and I suppose they were alot of pot floating around and stuff like that, you know. They were having a lot of problems and their decision was that the factory was to big to manage, from what I understand, so they started downsizing it. And that just kept on, we lost two tanks then, and that laid quite a few people off, and like I say I had two boys working there and they both got laid off then and they just didn't call then back. And under a contract, you have a five year recall rights, and after that you didn't have the recall rights for the...that allowed them to get rid of the ones they wanted to get rid of I suppose, you know, wait five years.

Christie: So a lot of those people never got called back?

Frederick: Oh, a lot of them never...never got called back, no.

Christie: How many people were left when the plant closed?

Frederick: Right at the end uh, not very many, I'd say probably at the tops probably 600, that would be management and hourly, probably be tops. (wow)

Christie: When we were talking about the union, I forgot to ask you about strikes, did the union go on strike?

Frederick: No, we were never legally on strike. Now they had a strike over there one time, in uh, lasted 52 days, I think it was, for three cents, that was the joke, that's what they went back for, three cents. That was the other local, the miscellaneous local, they had the strike, there for we were out of work, but in fact we drew unemployment, because we couldn't work, because they were on strike.



Christie: Oh, so you weren't officially on strike, but you couldn't work either?

Frederick: I was officially, I couldn't work, we didn't work. And we were allowed to go on unemployment back then. But they were out something like 50-50 some days, and when they went back they give them...they give them two more cents, I believe...well they agreed to settle the strike for two cents more than what they offered them, when they went on strike, that was a joke, a big joke then, now that's all.

Christie: Does that mean when you went...if you were to go on strike then they would all be out also?

Frederick: Yeah, because yeah what it mounted to was that uh, well basically what it came down to we wouldn't cross our picket line to start with, that was it. But they uh, they had to be out there to pack a bottle, we couldn't make 'em, you know, somebody had to pack them and ship them and all that. Now see the mold maker had a strike there, that back when the uh, well...I hadn't been there very long and uh, my dad...my dad was a mold maker and he was on strike and I had to cross his picket line, because our union said that you had...they sent a telegram in there and put it on the board, I never will forget it, and they said you got to abide by your contract, you know. Ok, I went to talk to my dad to ask him about it and he said, don't worry about it, you know, he said uh, there will be a lot of them crossing it and he said, you know, you go ahead and cross it too, don't worry about it. But that was back, oh lord, I wasn't very old then, I don't know how long ago that was, a long time. But that was the flint workers, they were out...they were out for a pretty good while.

Christie: So do you still see people from the plant, now that you...?

Frederick: Occasionally, yeah. Now, I don't see as many now that I use to, but I still have them call me once in a while or something like that, you know, if they have a problem, or they want something or whatever. Uh, some of them went to work in different glass houses, one boy went out to Indiana and one two of them are up in the upper end of West Virginia here in an Anchor plant and couple of them are in Florida, Lakeland, so you know. They are just...there is one that lives over here he's the president of the flint union, that lives over here on the hill. I see him pretty often, Bob Morris, is his name. And uh, actually ain't that to many that lives out here that works here. Use to be at one time, about everybody in Harveytown worked at Owens Illinois see. That was the main stay for Harveytown, I mean for the people who lived all the way up and down the road here.

Christie: And Johnstown.

Frederick: Yeah, Johnstown the same way. (yeah) Yeah, had quite a few of them. Well there is a Muncy boy who lived around here, he worked there, he's retired, Jim Muncy. And then uh lets see, Bob over there and myself, I was trying to think uh...there's not that many more out here any more. (yeah)

Christie: What about your boys, once they got laid off, they?

Frederick: Once they got laid off, they went to Texas and uh, they stayed down there for about two years, and then the oil boom blew up down there and they come back and my oldest boy, he works at Wareall up there in Milton. He had been up there about ten years now, I guess. And the other one, Tim, he works for Discover card in Columbus, Tim has been out there about five years? (talking to his wife) (about seven) about seven years. And my girl she lives down the road, down there.

Christie: She never worked at the plant?

Frederick: No, she never worked there, nut-huh, no.

Christie: I have asked you most of the specific questions, I don't know if you had any other stories or comments or anything that might be important to you, that you would want people to know about?

Frederick: Oh, no not really, no. Like I say, I was lucky enough with my education, you know, a high school education wasn't all that much. You went to high school because everybody, you know, your dad and your mother wanted you to go to high school, and when you came out of there, why you went to work in a factory, at Owens usually, I mean, or one of the factories here in Huntington. And just lucky enough that it worked out to where I had a good job all my life, good paying job, I mean, maybe not a good job, but...

Christie: How many years total did you put in?

Frederick: Uh, almost 41.

Christie: So you have your regular retirement, because you put in over 30 years?

Frederick: Yeah, see and then I'm 59, so I get...I got a supplement...what they call a supplement, they'll pay me a supplement until I'm 62 and then they reduce my pension, when I sign up for social security, so it is called a level income. I stay level you know, except my cost of living raises and the additional money I get on my pension. I still got uh, three...I have to look in my book, three more dollars, I think to be paid over the next three years, you know, I get a dollar for every year that you was there, so that is 40 dollars a year, every year that I get a raise in my pension. So our pension is not all that great,

we don't have any insurance, that's really what bugs me right now, my medical insurance expires the end of this month. And so me and my wife we have a trust fund insurance, but it is not real good. It will keep you from maybe losing your house or something, if you had a real bad sickness. And like I said, I had a heart attack, at least they tell me...I don't feel like I had one, but they told me I had one. They ran an [inaudible]...a balloon on me and if something like that would happen again, I would be kinda be hurting, without insurance. That's the biggest problem, for about everybody over there, except salary, see salary they got their insurance, that was always, kinda...we tried to get that but we never could get it.

Christie: The union tried to get it?

Frederick: Oh yeah, we tried to get it for a long time, yeah. In fact, the last time we...that almost came down a strike issue, but it didn't because that is something, you know, that is hard to do for retirees, you know, try to get it the best you can and but, you got people working. And like I say, they pay good money.

Christie: Were there a lot of people who got laid off when the plant closed who were real close to retirement?

Frederick: Oh yeah. Yeah, we had a lot of them. In fact one boy that lives up the road here, he had uh 28 years and so many months, not a couple of years of having his retirement, he don't have nothing after his unemployment runs out, that's it, they got vested rights, but you got to be 65 or when he gets 55 he can but he has to take a real reduction in it...in his pension. One half of one percent for every month you are under age 60, which is quite a quite a bit a penalty. But there were quite a few of them like that, yeah, quite a few. And they don't give you nothing, they just don't give it to you.

Christie: They didn't give anyone any days?

Frederick: They...they allowed five of my people to stay in the factory and work...the plant manager did. And 30 days that I think, most was the max, that's what some of them needed to get their 30 years in. (oh) So he let them stay in there and do what ever, you know, until they got their time in. One boy, Jim Muncie, down in Johnstown area, gave him his retirement, he was going to be 18 days short. (wow) Which could have been disastrous because they don't have to do that if they don't want to, you know, there is nothing you can do about it. In all fairness, I guess the plant manager did it. They allowed five of them I believe, to stay in there, different lengths of time.

Christie: Well uh I guess that is the only...over all maybe you can tell me the differences, sort of in general between when you started and when you left, as far as environment, management, and



how much you enjoy the job or...?

Frederick: I enjoyed it tremendously, really years ago, in fact...in fact, everybody, you know, I don't know, it wasn't all that bad to go to work, it was a lot...of course I was a lot younger to that makes a difference, I guess. Clowning around and whatever, there was a lot of horseplay went on and different stuff, and I ...it just gradually changed, like I say, I got older, but I could see a lot of change in it, you know. From the way that...people were still good, people were basically real good people. But uh, I don't know, you were under a lot of pressure at the last, and you know, they would say well were loosing so much money and...

END OF SIDE ONE

Frederick: ...depressing, you know, everybody would morale kinda down and they...and I think everybody kinda had an idea they were going to shut it down. My dad worked there 39 years, and he said I've heard it here all the time, I'm gonna shut this factory down, well I've heard it all my life too, when I worked here, their gonna shut the factory down, well they finally shut it down, I mean, it finally come true. So it was just...I don't know, it is hard to explain how it changed, really. I don't know, people...like I say you went in there and everybody worked pretty hard and uh, it was hot where I worked there, like I say it was hot. You just...I don't know, your just more loose, really, I don't know what it was. You just were under pressure, you know...just right there at the last everyone was under a lot of pressure, they really were. They were just...try to do the best they could and you know...post the figures, your not doing no good, you ain't making no money. Now whether they were or not, I don't know. I got no way of knowing now except their figures. And since we left there, they have had stories around, you know, embezzlement, [inaudible]...went on and all this stuff. And I do know it happened one time, it's possible, but you know, its just everybody take...they want to blame somebody for it, you know, because I understand that though. So they took out whom ever the plant manger or somebody, you now, he done this and he done that, but it is just one of those things, it happens. I know they shut eight in Oklahoma down, those people hated it out there, and they shut one down in Alabama and in fact, that guy come to the wage negotiations, and I have never meet him before, and they had already shut that factory down, and he was talking about what a blow it was to them, and all. He said you won't know until it happens to you, well it didn't, well know you know, over here see. So like I say they shut them down, they shut three over in New Jersey down, there were quite a few rumors going around that Huntington might go down, Lapelle Indiana might go down, Zainesville, here between Zainesville, uh, got three in Pennsylvania, got two in Virginia, so their right around. On the street of Illinois they got one, Atlanta, Georgia they got one, Lakeland Florida...I mean they got quite a few factories that could

take care of the area that your in. We use to think years ago...that we probably were...we probably were the worlds best bottle makers here. They use to...they send guys in from Toledo, you know, and in jobs, that they said they could make it someplace, send it to Huntington, you know. I'm satisfied that we got a lot like that, but any more its not like that, after the last one like that, its just, I don't know, I can't explain it, really, it just changed.

Christie: Plus in the earlier years, your whole family was there.

Frederick: Oh yeah, yeah, sure. Yeah they was. We had quite a few family.

Christie: And you father retired with 39 years?

Frederick: Yeah, he had to have disability, he had a...he had a bad heart, he retired. And then like I said, I had two brothers that worked there, and I had a niece that worked there for a while, like I say, my two boys and myself. And uh, it wasn't uncommon, really, it wasn't uncommon to have uh, four or five brothers there. I mean the Stevenson boys, there were several of them there. It wasn't uncommon at all. In fact, the joke was you had to be careful what you said about somebody, because they're probably related to them, you know, you wouldn't realize it. {laughter} (yeah) There was quite a bit of relation work there.

Christie: A lot people told me they meet their spouses there.

Frederick: Yeah, yeah and like I say, back then, okay if you had a boy working there and he was bowling up, you know, and you knew it, you could go talk to him, about your bowling up or whatever it is, you know. And then it changed, you had to go through the hiring process of the job service, or what ever it was then, you know. They didn't have their pick of who they hired really. Really that is what it amounted to, they had to take them basically I guess as they come, I don't know. Always before, you know, you had somebody that if they wanted to recommend their son or daughter uh, that's kinda...they've been there for 20 years or 25 years, whatever, and a good work record, you know, and they...son or daughter goes in there and has a bad work record, you know, that is kinda a through back on them to so, I think that had a lot to do with it, I really do. People just didn't work, lay off or nothing, or whatever, you know, they didn't do it.

Christie: Ok, thank you very much.

Frederick: Ok, alright.

END OF INTERVIEW